

March 30, 2006

Statement of the Honorable Rahm Emanuel  
Original Jurisdiction Hearing on the Lobbying Accountability and Transparency Act of 2006  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Committee on Rules  
U.S. Capitol, H-313

Mr. Chairman,

Thank you for holding this important hearing on lobbying and ethics reform.

An ethical cloud continues to hang over Congress, as it has for months. Public approval of Congress is at historical lows and the American people are demanding that we clean up the government at both ends of Pennsylvania Avenue. Yet, Congress has been slow to act and the House Ethics Committee has not met a single time this year, even after the stunning revelations of corruption and influence peddling by Jack Abramoff and Randy “Duke” Cunningham.

Unfortunately, however, these cases are merely outsized examples of the endemic problems that have arisen in recent years –epitomized by the ‘K Street Project’ and the pay-to-play practices that are now business as usual in the legislative and executive branches of our government.

Congress last updated the lobbying laws in 1995. Since then, the lobbying industry has grown exponentially, and new strategies for evading restrictions have emerged. At the same time, the laws and ethics rules have failed to keep pace. We face an institutional problem requiring an institutional solution. Just as we addressed the corrupting influence of soft money contributions with new campaign finance rules, we must address corrupting relationships between lobbyists and government officials with tough, new reforms.

In May 2005, Congressman Martin T. Meehan and I introduced *the Special Interest Lobbying and Ethics Accountability Act of 2005* (H.R. 2412), the first lobbying reform bill of the 109<sup>th</sup> Congress, to clean up the way Washington does the people’s business and to ensure Americans that their government puts their interests ahead of the special interests.

Our legislation reforms the relationship between Congress and K Street in four central ways: enhancing disclosure, curbing privately funded junkets by members of Congress, slowing the ‘revolving door’ between government service and lobbying, and putting real teeth in how the rules are enforced.

Democratic Leader Nancy Pelosi later introduced *the Honest Leadership and Open Government Act of 2006* (H.R. 4682) containing critical new provisions to help restore honesty and integrity to our government.

It is long past time to pass the strongest possible lobbying and ethics reform legislation. Only by acting quickly and decisively can Congress demonstrate to the American people that we will not allow the culture of corruption to continue.

The Senate's rejection yesterday of new restrictions on private charter jet travel, lobbyist-sponsored travel, and most importantly, of an independent Office of Public Integrity, is a missed opportunity for real reform. The House of Representatives now has a chance to demonstrate real leadership by adopting these critical measures and by resisting the attempts of some to include "poison pill" campaign finance provisions in an attempt to derail reform. The American people will not accept cosmetic changes under the guise of real reform. We can and must do better.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.